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INTEGRATION OF YOGA AND HEMI-SYNC®: SOME BEGINNING CONSIDERATIONS

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Summary

Integral Yoga is defined, methods of instruction are outlined, the student/patient population is described, and the use of Hemi-Sync within these parameters is presented. Plans for the coming year are discussed. Objective criteria have not been utilized and no serious attempts have been made to use Hemi-Sync with affective, paranoid, or schizophrenic disorders.

Thank you so much for coming to listen this morning. At the very beginning of our discussion I would like to point out that I am new to Hemi-Sync; I have been using the tapes myself for perhaps eight months and I began using them with students about five or six months ago. While I am currently somewhere in the *Freedom Wave*—and trying hard to keep up with the tapes that arrive in the mail—the work with students has been confined to the *Discovery* series.

So, then, I would like to share with you some of my experiences, outline some plans for Hemi-Sync in the coming year, and ask for your criticism and advice. As we get into the discussion, I believe that you will see that the MIAS approach is, in many ways, very close to classical yoga technique.

But before we begin with some definitions, let's talk for a moment about the difficulties I suspect most of us involved in teaching of any kind experience. Perhaps we could all agree with the individual who suggested that there are plenty of teachers but very few students, and this suggests that we need to continuously search for ways to help the student find significance in what we're talking about. In New York, if your student sees a battleship steaming up the street in front of his house he will call the road department, complain about the noise and congestion, and return to the television. If you put him in his REBAL, send him to check something 500 miles away, he will indeed do just that, and then ask if he can be excused because the pizza is getting cold.

The reaction, then, to these experiences is not belief or disbelief, but, rather, "What good is it, where does it fit in my life, how much time does it take, etc." Now, I am finding that the

utilization of Hemi-Sync can help introduce tangible experiences at an early enough stage to get real work done before some of this lethargic thinking creeps in.

Some definitions, then. Most of you, I'm sure, know that Integral Yoga, Astanga Yoga, and Classical Yoga may be, in general, considered synonymous. The components of this path consist of: the moral observances, the postures, breath control, concentration, withdrawal of the senses, meditation-contemplation, and superconsciousness.

Within the last decade or two there has been increasing interest in self-regulatory techniques as adjuncts to the more conventional therapies. Many of these techniques may, with good reason, be considered offshoots of the yoga system. Included in this category are: progressive relaxation, autogenic training, concentrative movement therapies, systematic desensitization approaches, breathing therapies, biofeedback and visualization training designed to affect changes in physiological functioning. The yoga system is concerned with all of the somatopsychic training principles involved in the foregoing as part of a holistic body-mind approach, not as isolated techniques. Boyeche¹ lists six basic somatopsychic principles unique to the yoga system:

1. The maintenance of a variety of postures involving ... stretching of both localized muscles as well as the whole body "gestalt", which are especially aimed at the strengthening the muscles supporting the spinal column and the abdominal muscles, and restoring optimal muscle tone, posture, and respiration.
2. The maintenance of a variety of 'head-low' postures which alter blood flow to the head and brain in particular.
3. The practice of ocular and vocal muscular stretching and fixation (immobilization) which leads to temporary inhibition of perceptual-cognitive functioning, facilitating concentration and 'ego-loss'.
4. The practice of complete somatopsychic relaxation in optimal postural positions.
5. The practice of voluntary breath regulation and cessation done in coordination with various postures, which de-conditions irregular breathing patterns, restores optimal diaphragmatic breathing, and which can also lead to changes in consciousness.
6. The practice of concentration/meditation in optimal postural positions, ultimately leading to a sense of awareness other than that of our usual self-consciousness.

And these descriptions of yoga include the utilization of sound: Japa Yoga—using a mantram, a one or more syllable sound structure which equates with a particular aspect of the cosmic vibration and which will produce within the individual a vibration in tune with the cosmic, and, Ajapa Yoga which involves listening to one's breath for the ongoing hum within.

¹ Goyeche, John, R.M., Yoga as Therapy in Psychosomatic Medicine, Proc. 4th Congr. Int. College Psychosom. Med. Kyoto, 1977

Now these divisions are really for definition; in practice a “standard yoga class would have some practice in each of these categories. An Integral Yoga class, for example, would usually consist of: opening chant, brief sitting, stretching, breathing practice, meditation, and closing chant. However, there is of necessity a great deal of teaching that is not “standard”.

The author, for example, teaches senior citizens, some studio classes, Roman Catholic Sisters, adolescent patients in a locked psychiatric ward of a public teaching hospital, and a substantial number of individual students. Even the class work should involve tailoring at-home work for individuals. Hemi-Sync has been used in all individual settings, but not as yet with groups (only because I have not yet enough experience to know how best to do this).

It is this “non-standard” teaching that I’m going to talk about today. That is, the work with the individual student essentially outside a class or group situation. And I will confine the discussion to only two areas of work.

Yogic philosophy postulates the existence of the “Seer”, that is, the see-er, one who sees, and the word we use to describe who is doing the seeing is the “Self”. The word is not used in the same sense as it is used in western psychologies. It is, from the yogic point of view, the Self that is doing the watching in Focus 10; it is the Self that sees the body lying on the mat; it is the Self that can watch the thoughts. It is, then, not the body, not the mind, but this thing we call the Self, that is going to do the work.

This notion is taught, very lightly, in every beginning yoga class. The student is asked, in the deep relaxation portion of the session, to “see” the body relaxed and at ease, to “see” the breath, to “see” the thoughts passing by. Now if, and it is a very big if, the student can in fact see his body, or even get a sense of it, we have a beginning point. A beginning point for what?

First, perhaps, a point where the student can begin to get some notion of the reality of thought forms, and, for our purposes today, to begin to recognize that these thought forms are coming out of his own computer bank (largely). Therefore, if they are his, are real, just like marbles or stuffed eggplant, perhaps he can begin to get some control over them.

To pause for a moment, we know that in psychiatry there is of course always the question of possible depersonalization when these techniques are used. Certainly guided imagery and the like are contra-indicated during active psychosis. But, in my experience, from a practical point of view, they are contra-indicated not because they exacerbate the psychosis, but because the patient is not paying any attention anyway. “Clicking-out” is not just a MIAS phenomenon; I find it very common with regular yoga students and especially with the mentally ill. That is, when they should be doing some “work” in a Focus 10 state, they are just plain “spacing-out”, going to their favorite haunt, or whatever. In any case the teacher is talking to himself until the student is called back. Of course, once medication begins to be effective, and the patient begins to “clear”, the situation may become quite workable.

Let's return to technique. Or, one set of techniques. Once the student is able to sense the difference between the Self and his body and between the Self and thought forms, I ask him to visualize the worst possible case; that is, a bad situation or experience that really makes him angry, etc.

And, I ask that he examine, really "look at", his feelings, i.e., thought-forms, at the same time, I ask that he "look at" his physical reactions. Does he feel hot or cold, where? He is told very clearly that if the experience gets too "heavy" the instructor will call him back at once.

Once this is done the opposite polarity is experienced. What do you love the most, or what experience makes you really happy? Here we do the same thing: observe. Suddenly we have the Self doing some work; the student realizes, hopefully, that something else is doing the watching of all this switching about. Fine; now what?

In my experience, with a little practice in going from positive to negative ideation the student quite quickly realizes that maybe this is something he can use in his day-to-day life situation. He can easily learn to feel the physical reaction to his thoughts. (And, as far as I can tell, these physical reactions are not the same for everyone.) He can recognize the physical reactions, perhaps, as advance indications of behavior about to erupt, good or bad.

What appears to happen is that the anxiety level is substantially reduced. The student finds he can now handle negative thought clusters with less fear, and that he may be able to react to a given situation in a way that is most beneficial to his objectives. If the student is in some form of psychotherapy these practices make him much more accessible to the therapist.

In my opinion these techniques must be done, or, certainly, are much more easily taught, in something close to Focus 10, an altered state of consciousness. Practice with Hemi-Sync cuts the time-to-Focus-10-equivalent down very much indeed, making it possible for the student to use the techniques on his own, without tapes, very quickly.

I will add here that utilizing the Energy Conversion Box along the way is very helpful. It is a tool that fits in nicely with all the techniques described above.

Of course the techniques just described are rather simplistic, but, in the beginning stages, very effective—they work! In advanced yogic practice the subconscious is not glossed over at all, but dealt with in very specific ways. I will touch on this aspect towards the end of this paper.

Perhaps if we look at a brief case history, using the ideas described above, we can see how it works in practice.

A 12-year-old highly intelligent male was hospitalized with a diagnosis of "separation anxiety" because he remained in his room for days, refusing school or any other form of social contact.

Given Mellaril, 25mg, bid, for anxiety. His attitude on the ward was seclusive, always reading, no peer interaction. Yoga prescribed. Teaching was confined to progressive relaxation. In this exercise the student is told to “see” the body, then “watch” the thoughts and is told that it is the “Self” which is doing the watching. At the end of the first session it was apparent that the level of anxiety was such that he could not easily elicit the relaxation response required for further work. He was given *Discovery 1, 2 & 3* (through REBAL), a cassette player with earphones, and told to listen to it for a few days. He did.

The next session he did all the talking. Found he could float in REBAL and travel a bit. It was suggested that if he could travel, why didn't he do some thing useful with it. He decided that he would go home that evening and check out his room. This was Tuesday. Visiting hours were on Wednesday and I saw him again on Thursday. I was greeted at the door with a big grin! He had gone home and found his room rearranged and had confronted his parents with this terrible thing! At this point he believed in the reality of the Hemi-Sync process work could begin.

The next session: Can you put yourself into Focus 10, now, without the tape? I think so...yes...o.k. Then describe to me how it feels when you are sitting in your room at home, depressed, etc. ...Don't go into, just tell me about it. (Described depressions, feelings, et al). OK. Now...right now...what do you like best...what makes you really feel good?...That science fiction book I'm reading., the one on the table. O.K., you realize you can see these thought patterns?... Sure...

Fine, right now, this minute, I want you to go into that bad part...the depression, experience it for real. Then come out of it and go right into your book...it's right here. I'm afraid to do it...OK., take a few minutes and get really into a clear Focus 10, using the energy conversion box first, then raise your hand when you're going into the bad stuff. In a few moments after that I will help you get to the book. O.K.

This was done and completed with a big grin. O.K., who is in control of these thought patterns? Me. Fine, do you think you could practice this once or twice a day all by yourself? Sure.

Improvement began the next day. Within a week the patient was well socialized and participating in all ward activities, and talking about going home. He continued to listen to *Discovery #3* every night which apparently reduced the anxiety level even more.

Now, while this was seen as work done, the time frame was too short to expect permanent change. In spite of this he responded so well to psychotherapy that he was discharged two and a half weeks after introduction of Hemi-Sync.

I have used the *Discovery* tapes in quite a few similar situations, all less dramatic, but with equally favorable results. Since the same techniques are used without Hemi-Sync there may

be some validity in suggesting that perhaps the tapes cut down the time in the beginning phases by 50%. It is also possible to reach people with Hemi-Sync that I don't believe could be reached otherwise.

For example, a 23 year old nurse was hospitalized while at work with a bad case of ulcers. She knew nothing about yoga and only knew me as an individual that was, maybe, O.K. I went to see her in the hospital with 1) *Discovery 1 & 2*, 2) a cassette player, and 3) one yellow rose. Four months later she is physically clear and what the Zen people call a class 1 student. She was originally given no explanation for the tapes; just asked to listen. There can be no question that the tapes reduced the anxiety level very substantially indeed.

Now, perhaps, I should briefly describe the way that I work with a student like this. The young lady was very comfortable with *Discovery 3* and out of the hospital for perhaps two weeks before I gave her a xerox copy of the blue manual. At the same time I gave her a copy of Alan Arkin's *Halfway Through the Door*; this is a very down-to-earth account of that actor's first years as a yoga student and the relationship that he has with his teacher.

We then began to meet once a week, for perhaps a month. This frequency has been gradually reduced to once or twice a month, or, when either of us feel it is time. These are not 50-minute hours. Usually we spend perhaps an entire afternoon, walking along the Hudson River, sitting in a park, or doing whatever feels appropriate. We talk about her experiences with Hemi-Sync, her relationship with the man she loves, her family, her work; all, I hope, within a yogic framework. Progress has been rapid.

Without the MIAS material I would not have this young lady as a friend and student. I doubt that she would have come to a regular yoga class. Even had she done so, it would have, perhaps, taken many weeks before she could reach focus 10. Because she was leary of this "weird yoga stuff", how long would it have been before chanting could have been introduced? And breath awareness? But here it is on every MIAS tape! MIAS provides a practical, experiential, introduction to yoga and, not unimportant, frees the teacher for some of the other aspects of teaching.

Our discussion up to this point has been centered around the beginning aspects of yogic practice. I would like now to move on to another area of interface between yoga and the MIAS approach.

A short time ago a yoga teacher came to visit. I had not seen her for perhaps a year although we are very close and have taught together on many occasions. The young lady has been teaching for 15 years, since she was 16, is an excellent hatha teacher, is well grounded in the philosophical aspects, and is quite able to rest in samadhi, or super-consciousness, at will.

With no prompting at all I told her about Hemi-Sync and the things I was doing with it. She expressed some doubt and asked to hear a tape. I put on the focus-12 tape that lets you ask a question and gave her no briefing whatever. I left the house for 45 minutes.

When I returned, she was sitting up, looking a bit spacey. The first thing she asked me was why had I put a hot plate on her feet and almost burned her up. She then told me that she had, when the tape went to 12, gone into samadhi for some time, and that this had been followed by a detailed answer to her question.

I then told her about the energy bar tool, the body map, and some of the other exercises, and asked her what she thought. In spite of her experience she found it frightening. Why? Because, while she has been an excellent meditator for many years, she said she had avoided contemplation, in it's formal aspects, entirely. Why? Fear, just plain fear, she said.

A definition is in order and, again, I shall risk being over simplistic. Meditation is done, usually, in the sitting position and one end result is one stage or another of super-consciousness. This may, for our purposes, be described as a somewhat "steady-state", to borrow a word.

Contemplation on the other hand is usually done in the corpse position, via yoga nidra, yogic sleep. In yoga nidra one does work. It is here that the difference between waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and a fourth and final state is examined. We could perhaps define contemplation as all the work that goes on during this examination as well as the actual work of dealing with desires, attachments, and so on, within ones computer bank.

Of course it can be frightening! But, at the same time, utilization of techniques associated with resolution of these questions can be very productive, and, perhaps, if approached with some of the MIAS tools, much less threatening.

In the year ahead, then, I would hope to begin to use more and more of the MIAS tools with students. I can see no area that cannot be used to advantage by the yoga teacher.

All of the learning situations described here have involved efforts on the part of the student to achieve some control in altered states. However, the yoga teacher is just as concerned with ordinary reality and techniques which can be used to sharpen the student's awareness in everyday life. The work being done by Devon and others at this conference should be valuable to teachers in any discipline. If the daily life situation is not reasonably under control, yogic practice will go by the board at times, especially in the beginning.

Thank you so much.

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